INITIATE

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EVOCATION

the body is the beginning of all wisdom, this creature
fed bread and milk, that cries out, “I am, I am”

struggling ever against and for
the welcome, gentle pain of definition.
I am one thing. you are another. the trap
of skin binds the body in its embrace

a net that means to snare. inside, light
called being flutters and strains, grasping for an edge
an escape.

the candle snuffed out in a green pond does not go anywhere.
it transforms only into darkness.

when the crying voice is silenced, where does the body go?
into the weeds. into the fern. into the wellwater. into the dirt.

the boundary line of skin is a hedgerow thrumming with life.

yellow furze weaves its light over sedge and grey stone, hissing
the spiny urchin boughs of yew gleam
black against candy apple berries. they bleed into a red-tide
of haws from whitethorn's bony hand outstretched
plaintively skyward, stark and solemn
like a delusion of god.

this land is possessed by a longing to devour.
hunger scars the hills and fens. they are cracked
like a hollow egg into a form
slimmed by a diet of starvation.

the lush fields
are a mass grave. inside this tomb
the deceased body sprouts

in profusion, a spring
that grants a feast of worms eaten
up by death-birds calling.

wiped of all other life, the grass
turns green. fed by blood, it turns greener.

everything eats as though it is starving.

the bog is an open mouth. it cannibalizes its offerings
of gold and leather and elk
whose arborescent antlers sweep to gore
red sunlight from sky. men
slit until their skin is threshed from kinghood.

god was a parlour trick
until he was killed.
death is what makes us holy.

consumed by the land, the dead
become part of its ruling
inflicting their will through the toad rush and deergrass
through the black hole of the bog mouth
and its alluvial blood.

the red veins stretch and spread their vitriol through the body

into the sunken oak
into the hazel flower
into the russet hare wide-eyed with knowing

I watch the bloom around me
observing as a holy rite.

the star-thicket, a patch of briar
teething its dark fruit against the sprouting night

the new green shoots among the sky
unfurling into being
these stars, too, have teeth
bramble-sharp and lashed together in a map
stellar strap lichen bodies bursting with black fruit

what shall we eat? that's always the question.
of what shall we make a meal?
the gnawing stars?
the gnashing fruit?

we till the earth to fill our bellies
we uproot and dissect her
we kill and eat her children
we dig with our spades like fingers
prying into a fox den.

a hole is the beginning of the universe
the home where we are reared into being

that belly of a hill like a waterlily moon.

if I descend into the mound
will I be netted
in the night-garden of the black toad
called the soul?

the hollow is where the fever grows.

I must go.
I must go.
I must go.

I swim into the earth like a taproot mermaid
a white ghost, a white snake thirsting
and lapping at the loam of what I once knew

a cell inside a body
a worm inside a fish
a set of teeth in the womb

I have made for myself
a bower of dirt
a nest in which I will become
an egg, ouroboros-bent, feeding
on itself

witchcraft is an act of remembering.

ECSTASIS

the passage tomb of dirt feeds me.

inside a sky-darkened underhill
night births itself.
the white stars that fell to earth as stones
glow and coil and press themselves like flowers
in the deep-sea layers of sediment

in the bell-jar of this green hill
the firmament is the fundament.

the whitest, largest stone is pale as a worm
and shines lily-pad flat and wet
a bullán jeweled with hollow places
a moon swollen with water

stars swarm her like a skirt

I scry into the holes of her.
she opposes me and blossoms into the smooth lake of a mirror
drink, she bids me

I have no need of serpents. I am one.

my body is thin like a whip and unyielding.
I leave myself no wounds. I hiss
with my teeth clenched.

she mushrooms and becomes cnidarian, with long tendrils
of light. a lion's mane jellyfish that fattens
into a translucent coin when cast ashore

roots of the stones grow slim and deep
and green, a freshly dug star
or cabbage butterfly.

the night breaks overhead, brittlestar-fragile
in the dark the white deathcap sings

green is a sharpness. green is a thorn.
green is a stitch-slip. green is devouring.

vine will conquer stone if fed
by atrophy.
strength must feast
on a pile of bodies

the loom of the world spins on devouring
and being devoured

our graves are bonemeal for the good black earth,
the rich black earth. the plethora black
that carries all life inside it.

death is a garden. the slow, kind process of decay
looks much the same as mothering

in this way, you are not your own. you are made
from dirt, from rib, from clay of those
who came before you. the ghosts that haunt your blood
as you haunt now

you have burrowed into me like a worm in a nut.
will you rest? will you eat?

the body must germinate tenderly
unfurling in light and sugar and sweet, loving darkness
it cannot be crushed or hurried
this is why the body is a seed

you cantrap your way into life
on a tightrope cobweb

your form is fragile as a crest of foam

the snake becomes a wound when growing. the wound
is a doorway, open
on both sides

in choosing, you cast yourself into a willow buck.

the stars will swim upstream, in the delta
of your throat.

you may let an apple rot
and breed into spellwater
or you may eat it.

apotheosis is a business of blood.
the cell must divide in order to become

I and you are a dog whelk curling.

INVOCATION

my body is a shell
encrusted with moonlight
I ride the curve of myself, singing
a half-life of gold stitched together

I coruscate on endless streams of light

my body is a tide of frog spawn
gleaming and slick, a legion
of thick selves nesting
in a snarl of wet algae

I saturate as a shrine in the groundwater
my roots plunge silver into darkness

my body is a smooth newt
a velvet mankeeper that creeps
in the belly. I wrap my young in leaves. I breed
a manifold existence in the gut of those who destroyed me

I thresh myself into gardens to inflict wildness on civilization

my body is a mouse-bird which scurries
between the furze's grey-green teeth
to drink the sun in flower

wren crowned in thorny brush
stabs at the wet soil with a soil-black beak
a sharp railroad spike to pierce the earth
like a root thirsting

this hunger prayer ensnares me to the wellspring tree.

my body is a wave of sound that slides through stones
through moss, heather, leaf-mould, acidic peat
until a deep glow emerges

there is fire buried in the rotting earth
there is fire in the decaying oak
there is fire in the kingdom under the sea

my body is a blue flame howling in the delta's throat

up I rise in the water rush
lapping at marsh marigold and reeds
blue water-mint and heady white meadowsweet
I caress and kiss the river

my body is a salmon leaping
which casts a spray of crystal through the air
like chandeliers. I thrash in cold, clear water
I swim with many relatives. we all
know where we are going

our backs are a web of constellations

we are the stars that survive from sea to stream
silver and shining as if for love of the moon

my body is a tangle of slim white stalks
a spinal cord that grows from the mouth
into the red-flowered tree bearing fruit
I water the firmament with my harvest

my body is the nettle
reedy, woody, returning like god
in the thicket of winter

the old green teeth, bared
to thresh the new gods. some seeds
grow even in the poorest soil.

my body is an eel like a tongue
curling into silver glyphs, the ghost
in the holy well

I witch and heal in water
hallowed into hollow places

my body is a sloe-eyed seal
wearing at will the skin of itself
or walking with feet pressed bare against soil

my body is the dawn, the shore, the loaf of bread
only lightly baked.
it twines like a bindweed helix up to the sun
to drink.

my body is marsh violet, harebell, cuckoo flower
my body is the king bloom of crabapple fruiting

I am made of what has loved me.
love is always a subsumption
of self

and consumption of other.

my body is a large emerald devouring
the white-throated mad birch, the red-robed hazel
I dance in flight, with erratic grace
I fly like moonflower up to the stars

I am the crinoline of whitethorn
I am the meeting of the waters
I am the bird that cannot be caught
I am the fire in the head

the fire-glow
of blue-flame starlight in the cold grey sea
in the green wrought sea
in the bloom-red sea

I am the snake in the ocean sky, submerged
with stars leaping like fish
to avoid capture

they swarm
a thronging mass of gods like insects
bend their necks to drink deeply from flowers blooming
as if to preserve the world in the honey jar
of their belly.

leaves curl into undergrowth
their teeth shine with hunger.

I weave my body into the pattern of a loom.

I am among the stars with my needle and thread.

the worm in the nut leaves the shell untouched.
hollow places become a shrine
on which the darkness feeds.

I have always known how to sew.

with my perfumed hellmouth I unpick stitches
and in many waters

sing

let the dark curve around you
like the depression of a hare
in the tall moor grass
which lovingly cradles the ghost of its form.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Mabel Martin worked as a farm janitor, a private tutor, and a local conjuror before becoming the co-editor of Cantrap Press. She created, stars in, and writes the acclaimed podcast Mabel. She lives in Ireland, where she practices ecstatic rites in a modern-day mystery cult.

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